

The Telecom Commission (TC) has given a green signal to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI's) suggestion of relaxing spectrum holding limits.

In December 2017, TRAI had recommended removal of any cap on spectrum holding for operators in a given band. It had suggested a 50 per cent cap on combined spectrum holding in efficient bands like 700 MHz, 800 MHz and 900 MHz. Currently, an operator is not allowed to hold more than 25 per cent of total spectrum in an area and more than 50 per cent in a particular band.

Telecom Commission's approval is likely to aid mergers and acquisitions as well as spectrum sale in the Indian telecom market thereby providing an easy exit for operators who are under severe financial stress. Smaller operators have been trying to sell spectrum in a bid to pare their debt.

The move will also benefit operators such as Vodafone India and Idea Cellular, which are in the process of merging their operations. Post-merger, the combined entity would be able to retain all the airwaves owned individually by the two companies. Further, such a move would also offer an opportunity to Reliance Jio Infocomm to acquire more airwaves in the 850 MHz band from Reliance Communications.

Telecom Commission's decision will now go to the Union Cabinet for approval.

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